File 1
0:00:00.0
(I am in Bethany, Oklahoma, and I'm talking to Monte Dodson. It's July 12th, 2006. Why don't you go ahead and say your name and say something so I can get a sound reading?)

Well, I'm Monte Dodson. I was born in 1925 right here in Oklahoma City.

(That's perfect. I'm just gonna go through the questions, and we can talk about anything else comes to your mind.)

Well, I didn't know what you wanted to start, did you want me to give you background?

(Yeah, just about you. Did your family grow up here?)

Right here, not too far, about three or four miles, is where I grew up. I was born in 1925, it's during kind of the fur boom there, even though it was Depression days. It was Depression days. Furs didn't bring very much, but a nickel would buy you a loaf of bread about like that, or 10 cents would buy you a large loaf of bread. Gasoline, 11 to 13 cents a gallon.

(I wish! [laughs])

Almost I would say in every county, perhaps in the county seat there would be a fur buyer, probably. That's how much interest there was in fur.

(What kind of fur?)

All kinds.

(Any kind?)

Mm-hmm. Even skunks. A lot of interest in skunks.

(Did they dye them? They must have dyed them.)

Well, in those days the black skunks was the ones they wanted—was the least white. Nowadays, they want the broad stripe. See, there's four different kinds. They have the blacks, the shorts, the narrows, and the broads. And so then they wanted the black. They didn't mind the smell—

(Jeez.)

— in those days.

0:02:01.2
I was in Linwood grade school, and I can think of at least five other guys that were trappin', and they got me interested. My grandmother bought me this book, 50 cents.

(*Guide for Trapping*—.)

Here's what she wrote on there. This was my guidebook to start with. It's pretty well beat up. I studied the heck out of it, too.

(Oh, yeah!)

When I started trappin', it was mostly skunks and possums, and would you believe I'm still catchin' skunks and possums. [laughs]

([laughs] I can believe it. We get 'em around our house.)

Do you see, you can see my handwriting there, you can tell how young I was, I was 10 years old when I started trappin'.

(*Guide for Trapping and Care of Raw Furs*, by Harry J. Ladue.)

Right.

(That's cool. Former U.S. Game Warden.)

0:02:56.1
And then I wrote to the animal trap company and got this catalog, which I thought you might be interested to see.

(Victor.)

I wrote my name in. It has pictures of all the traps. And these traps now, they're very collectible. I don't know if you're interested in that or not.

(At the Vertebrate Pest Conference, there's a man who comes and has a huge display of old traps. It's really interesting.)

So he told you about them.

(I've seen some, but nothing like this. This is marvelous.)

See, these are very, very collectible traps. They still make the Newhouse trap, but it's got raised letters. These are stamped in the pan, see. I brought the traps here. [Sound of footsteps and chair moving.] I didn't know whether any of the guys showed you any traps.

0:03:50.1
(No, I haven't seen any.)

[sound of chains]

I bought these at the last fed auction.

(Wow!)

This is a Newhouse 1 1/2. It's very built still. You could still use it, see?

(Oh, yeah.)

But if you ever get into trap collecting, be sure that it's complete, hadn't been run over, and that you can read the pan. That's very important. There are some other traps here [sound of chains] that are also collectible, [sound of chairs] but the pans are not readable. This is a Victor.

(Oh, yeah, it looks like it's nice and—it's flat and it's [can't understand])

Well, it's just old. But one thing you might—if your husband ever gets to collectin', the old traps have this square rivet on the—this is the cross, this is the base, and it'll be a square. The modern traps are spot-welded, particularly the smaller traps. That's one way to tell. To be a collectible trap, it needs to be complete—

(Workable?)

It doesn't have to be offset or anything. The jaw should be pretty good shape and hadn't been run over. The chain—now, this would be an excellent collector trap except the pan is not very readable. It still has a value, but not very much. This trap here, now, I can read the "Newhouse trap," and it's complete. [sound of chains]

(Chain on it and everything.)

0:05:14.7
There was a couple others. [sound of chains] [Can't hear words] there, and—

(Those are a lot smaller. Those are still Newhouse?)

These are Triumphs. See where the cross is pinched? [chuckles] Unfortunately, this trap has—you can read the pan, but it's been hurt. See, it's got—

(It's broke, yeah.)

And the chain is not right. But this trap is the best trap except you can't read the pan. But it's complete, and it still has a value. It's just a shame that—but you know, I got 'em all for $9. And the Newhouse trap by itself is probably worth $10 to $15 just by itself. But I got into trap collecting.

(You could put a board up with all the different traps and snares.)

I could. I've got a whole shed full of traps. I've got to get rid of 'em. If you ever start collectin'—

(We can put them in—)

—I would say make it somethin' small.

([laughs])

Like shot glasses or earrings, because unless you've got the space, space is gonna become a problem. My first shed is just full of traps.

(Traps! [laughs])

Jerald or Glynn would probably say the same thing. You finally get to the point where you're just loaded down with traps. And I'm a tool collector, too. They don't show it in here, but they make a tool for a Newhouse trap that is very collectible.

(Do they still—)

It's probably worth over $1,000.

(Oh, you're kidding!)

0:06:55.1
But the unfortunate thing is, there's not very many of 'em, and they weren't marked.

(So you can't really tell the provenance unless you know what you're doing?)

I know what they look like. They were made for bear traps.

(What would you use 'em for, just to work on—?)

I don't know exactly, but the Newhouse trap can be taken down a lot easier. Here's a—I've got a couple of those Newhouse gopher traps like that. These are fur frames that you can take the bolts off of here, see, and they come out. I don't know what-all they did with 'em, but they're built pretty good to start with. And any trap—tell your husband, if he ever gets to collectin', any steel trap he finds with teeth in it, very collectible. They quit puttin' 'em out for small animals years ago.

(Now they use passive-jaw traps.)

I thought you might be interested in that sort of thing.

(Oklahoma doesn't have a trapping ban? Or anything here?)

Oh, Oklahoma's got some of the worst trapping regulations you could ever imagine, just terrible, absolutely terrible. That's why—I didn't this past winter, but for the last 18 years I've trapped in Texas, because they're very generous with their laws. I wouldn't say "generous," they're just reasonable. Oklahoma is just horrible. That's just the way it is. You've got to put up signs, [sighs] you've got to have permission, written permission, you've got to have 24-hour check, it's only a two-month season. Everything is just—but anyway—

(That is cool.)

—this was when I was a young boy.

0:08:34.7
(Did your dad trap?)

No.

(Was he a rancher?)

No, but he was a hunter and fisherman, and I did a lot of that through the years. Like I say, during the Depression days, I had a bicycle, that was my only means of transportation. I started off walking to the trap line, as far as I could go from the house, but later on I went to the bicycle. [chuckles] I rode a bicycle clear till I [chuckles] practically the first year of college. In high school, I never had a date with a girl, because all I had was a bicycle. I didn't think any girl would want to go on a bicycle.

([chuckles])

Besides that I didn't have any money. [laughs]

(Now you could fit in, everybody rides their bikes now.)

So all I did was hunt, fish, and trap. And my mother, she'd get pretty aggravated with me. "Don't you ever want to amount to anything?

([chuckles])

You'll never amount to anything bein' out there on a creek bike." And she was probably right.

([chuckles])

But I fur trapped clear on up through college, down here at OU in Norman. I had an automobile by then, had a '40 Model Ford. I ran it on highway 9 out east towards Blanchard and then back up toward the Oklahoma border and then came back again. I ran what we call bridge-hopping, I put a couple of traps under each bridge as you come through. I did that while I was goin' to school. I had a fur buyer in Norman.

0:10:05.2
(How much was an average fur? How much did it cost, did they pay you?)

Oh, like I said, back then in the '30s, a dime, 15 cents for a possum, but you could get a good hamburger for 15 cents then. [chuckles] Skunks maybe 75 cents, a good black one would get you a dollar. Mink were highly prized.

(That's what I was thinking.)

I never did catch too many mink. I can remember I caught my first one, and it was caught accidentally. I didn't get into long-haired fur trapping till I went to work for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, then I got into that.

(What did you major in in college?)

Well, like I said, the only thing I did was hunt, fish, and trap after school and on weekends. Well [pause] when I graduated from high school, I said, "Boy, oh, boy, I've got it made now! I've got plenty of time to hunt, fish, and trap!" But my mother had other ideas. [laughs]

([laughs])

She loaded me up in a car and took me down to Oklahoma University.

(Good for her! [laughs])

[laughs] And enrolled me. Well, I had work during the summer for the state highway department part-time—I mean, not part-time, but just during the summer—on a survey party, what we called plates and surveys, where they survey for profiles on roads and things. So she put me in the college of civil engineering. [sighs] Which is good, except the courses were just awful.

(They're math, a lot of math. [chuckles])

Differential calculus, integral calculus, differential equations, you know? Oh, geez. And I was flunkin' everything, flunkin' everything. So they called me in. I had a counselor, just an old professor, called me in, trying to figure out how to keep me from failin' and everything. Finally he got—he said, "How come you—?" "Well, I just don't care that much about it." He said, "What do you like to do?" I said, "Well, I like to trap." And then this old guy just snarled at me. He said, "What do you want to be, an educated trapper?"

([chuckles])

You know, if I'd have had the nerve to do it, I'd have said, "Better than bein' an educated SOB." 'Course I would have got kicked out of school for sayin' it, glad I didn't!

0:12:29.5
But I should have. And he shouldn't have said that. And that's what I turned out to be, an educated trapper, really. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

I trap, fur trap. When I got out of there, I went to work on a lake patrol, out here at Lake Hefner (?) for the city, just patrolling and enforcing regulations and things, for a very short time. And then I got wind of a position with the Oklahoma Game and Fish department, and I worked for them.

(What year was that? Do you remember?)

1957, I believe. I worked for them, and I took a position as waterfowl biologist. [looking through papers] I wrote some articles for them, and I did banding for 'em, too. You can see—there's one of my things. I was still trappin' and at one point I was banding waterfowl for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with them. I started at Salt Plains refuge. Well [pause] raccoons are a good animal, but you can't believe what a predator they can be. See, I like to run the traps in the mornin' and in the evenin', and the morning catch is really good. But boy, I'll tell you, if you don't get there quick, the raccoons would get in there, they would kill and eat one or two, and if there was 50 ducks in the trap, they would kill every one of them.

(You're kidding!)

Just for the fun of killin'.

(I knew coyotes did that, but I didn't know a raccoon would do it.)

Oh, back then it was terrible. So I set a trap and caught it, this was on the national wildlife refuge, caught the 'coon and killed it. Well, the refuge manager told me that I'd better do my trappin' somewhere else, that's how protective they are about everything. They didn't care about the 'coon killin' all the ducks, you know? [chuckles]

0:14:22.2
So I went down to the Naval ammunition depot down at McAlester and I trapped down there. I had occasion to meet a government trapper assigned there, Fay Hardin, really a nice guy. He's gone now, but he was really good to me. Anyway, and I trapped ducks down there. But then I finally went on down to Lake Murray, on the east side of the lake over there. I trapped, I think I banded around 19,000 ducks down there.

(Oh, God.)

So I was trappin', I wasn't fur trappin', but I was trappin'. I still had trouble with 'coons, and finally I had to have an electric fence run clear out into the water around the trap to keep the 'coons from gettin' in there and killin'. I hated the 'coons from that standpoint. I don't hate 'em now, but I hated 'em then.

Anyway, I worked for the game department about 1957, workin' with waterfowl. [sound of shuffling papers] There was a U.S. game agent name of Aubrey Goodman, and we became real good friends. And he told me about this job that was coming available in the branch of Predator and Rodent Control. And he was a good reference. Actually, his office was in the same building down in Oklahoma City. So it really—it got me in. So that's when I started to work for the outfit, in 1957.

Have you met Bill Nelson?

(I don't think so.)

Not to be confused with the legendary Bill Nelson up in Montana and Wyoming.

(That's the one I was thinking of.)

0:15:56.1
Not him, no. This is W.O. Nelson, Jr. I think he's still around. He was the district agent there. Originally, I'll show you later, the original first district agent was John Gatlin, who was a former regional supervisor in Albuquerque, and then a gentleman by the name of A.E. Gray followed him, and then W.O. Nelson followed.

So anyway, I started as a GS5. They put me down in the basement of a sort of a warehouse. We had a great big barrel full of Newhouse 14s, with teeth, you know. Well, they had to get up to date, so I was given the job of tearin' down all those 14s and puttin' in offset round jaws. And I—within, I don't know, a couple a weeks, I just ruined—

([chuckles])

—about $3,000 worth of good collectible traps. [laughs] But it belonged to the government.

([chuckles])

It was theirs to ruin. But I just cringe when I think about it. I've got one at home, it was one—it was stolen somewhere. I bought it off an old boy for $20. But it's complete. It's got everything. That's the only one I've got, and it'd been stolen. Glynn Riley probably told you how many traps they lost down here.

(Yeah, he loses them a lot.)

People steal traps. If a guy—I lost 16 this last winter.

(Jeez.)

If the guy would come to me and say, "Do you really need the trap?" I'd give him the trap. And these guys that steal 'em, I don't know what they do with 'em.

(Are they stealin' 'em because you don't want you trapping, or because they trap themselves, or because it's there and they take it?)

There's always a chance it is a trapper that wants 'em. Maybe it's a guy that wants to sell 'em for a few bucks to go buy a few joints of pot or somethin' like that, or maybe think they can hang 'em on the wall or somethin', I don't know. There's just somethin' so fascinating about a steel trap.

0:17:54.2
I remember one time I was out here off of 39th Street, it was in the afternoon, I was down at a little place checking some traps. There was three little kids—teenagers. I heard one of 'em say, "Hey, you guys, I found me a trap!" Boy, I went runnin' up there and took it away from them in a hurry, or I would have lost that. But there's just somethin' fascinating about the traps.

(I can see kids doin' it.)

So anyway, that's how I got started. I worked there.

(So you were in Oklahoma City for awhile?)

Yeah, the office was downtown, you know. Now it's out near the Capitol, but it was in a building, just an office building, downtown. And I got acquainted and I really, really enjoyed it and met a lot of good guys. Most of 'em are all gone now. That's a sad thing about livin' a long time, is, you lose all of your friends. That's the thing about it.

(That's what my dad's saying, a lot of his friends are goin'.)

So if you want to—having started, if you want to go on with your questions.

(Let's see. What kind of, you told me about your work history as a trapper. What kind of work did you do when you were out of Oklahoma City? Did you get sent out to the district?)

Well, I actually was put on as—it would be an assistant district agent, just a GS5. But he let me go out and do some trappin'. A fellow, one of the assistants named John J. Pickens, a great trapper, I'll show you some pictures after a while, started showin' me how to trap. I trapped for a while. He wanted me to trap so I know what it's all about and what to look for, you know. We did den hunting and we'd hunt for puppy playgrounds, you know. At that time—I have to tell you this, you know I'm hardened enough about killin' now, but the first den of coyote pups that I dug up, the little fellas, you know, I had eight of 'em, I looked at 'em and I said, "God forgive me," and I killed 'em. It was really hard to kill those little ol' puppies, you know? But that was what had to be done, because durin' April and May, if you've got killin' goin' on, generally they're feedin' some pups.

(They're feeding the puppies?)

Yeah, 'cause they can live off of grasshoppers and a lot of stuff, they don't really have to kill. Not that they wouldn't if they had the chance, but most of the time, during the spring and summer, if you're gettin' killin', you start lookin' for the den. And this John Pickens was a super den-hunter. It was just like a detective, in a way. Drive the roads lookin' for a sign. One thing you might mention if you want to, I always tell the guys, what's the difference between sign and good sign? Sign is where a coyote is crossed out the road. Good sign is where they has come and gone, both ways. That way it tells you it's a regular travel way.

(OK, so they're always going through there on their way out looking for—?)

0:20:57.9
If you want to set on that sign right there, or if you want to follow it durin' the summer months, one way or the other, you're gonna find a den, probably, or a puppy playground. But John Pickens showed me all that. We always said that old John was half coyote.

(Coyote! He'd have to be to find them.)

Such a great man, just so super. He's gone now, but I won't ever forget him.

But they put me to doin' that, and then they put me—I had the southwest district of Oklahoma. I went down there, there was this old boy, Lyle Rexrow [?], and the first trip I made there to him, I walked into his barn and there was always skunk hides on boards.

(It smelled?)

I said, "Wow! You can't do that. You can't save skunks!" He was taking me. He said, "Well, they're already dead, I killed 'em on cyanide guns and what have you." I said, "It's taboo! You can't do it! Get rid of those things. I don't want to see any more hides."

(Oh, jeez. [chuckles])

"Don't save anything unless we tell you to save 'em."

(That was the policy then? You had to dispose of them?)

Oh, you can't save furs, skin and sell it at all! That's strictly taboo.

(Oh, as a government trapper?)

I guess you can't even sell the glands. You can't sell anything.

(You can't make a profit from anything?)

You can't do anything. Oh, man, that is—I just said, "I don't ever want to see—" He was an awful nice old boy. He got rid of 'em. I don't know how he ever did, whatever, he probably dropped 'em off somewhere. [laughs]

([laughs] Buried 'em.)

That was it. But I worked all down in there, and then we got into the compound 1080. I don't know whether you've been informed on that.

(The Research Center, I used to work with Guy Connelly. Mike Fall is another person that worked on the coyotes.)

0:22:51.2
Here, in the Oklahoma district, it was Oklahoma and Kansas together, we had both states. So I wrote an article for one of the trapper papers.

(I'm gonna have to do a literature search on you.)

You're goin' home with these copies, I made 'em for you.

(Oh, good, thank you.)

[looking through papers] "Prairie Dog Control." Here's one working with the ranchers and showin' them how we use 1080 grain, one little dipper around a prairie dog hole. This was

mostly in the Oklahoma Panhandle and northwestern Oklahoma and all over in western Kansas, clear up there almost to the Colorado line. We walked, we walked.

(I've seen photographs of people puttin' the bait out, and they're walking a line, a bunch of 'em walking around the whole town.)

Boy, there's thousands of acres of prairie dogs. I'd hate to see 'em exterminated, really and truly.

(I think they're part of the ecosystem—)

Right, yeah.

(— and they need to be—as long as they don't cause problems.)

When I was by myself, a long time I just worked by myself, small maybe just be 40, 50 acres, I'd drive in. I had the 222 Remington with a scope and I would always just shoot off all the easy ones, the dumb ones. By actual count on this 222, I killed over 2,000 prairie dogs.

(Oh, God, jeez.)

I sold that rifle here recently at an auction. I got $300 for it. But it was a darn good gun, had a lot of history behind it. I did prairie dog work. We did bird control work, too.

(Were those the main problems, that were coyote and prairie dog? Was the bird—?)

The birds kind of came on later, bird control came on later. I can tell you about that a little bit later. Anyway, this will go home with you.

(Somebody—)

And then I had this thing here. I quit the Game department. I worked good for the Game department, and it helped me get my job.

(They're still having the same problem with predator control in the refuges. They don't want to do it.)

[sighs] Yeah, I know.

(I believe that's true.)

Well, they almost—they got the national parks mentality, I think. Protect everything, no matter what it is. I don't want to exterminate anything, but as long as it's got a chance of comin' back, you know—

0:25:33.5
(They're having a problem now with endangered species animals that are on the brink of disappearing, they're just getting wiped out by predators. So we've done some work with that. I

know that they've started asking for help. You used to go out in the southwestern part of the state. Did you have to work out of your house from there? Were you in an office?)

I had this office here.

(Oh, here?)

I lived in the city and worked out here, just drove a government car and went down. I had about six or seven trappers to work with or more. I'd just visit 'em or ride a trap line with 'em, just see that everything was goin' OK, if they had any problems. It was just a matter of supervision.

(How did you, did the ranchers call you or the people that had the problems, they just called the office and said, "Get out here"?)

It worked both ways. We had cooperative agreements with the counties. Of course we got money from the state, and we had the federal funds, but we wouldn't put a man in a county at that time unless the county commissioners would put up money. We'd have a cooperative agreement. So if a county didn't have an agreement, we might go down there and just work for a day or two doin' somethin', you know, but we're not gonna give 'em a day-to-day control without a cooperative agreement. Now I don't think it's that way, but then it was. And our field force, I don't know how many men they've got here in Oklahoma now, did John tell you how many?

0:27:06.7
(I don't know. I can find out.)

I think our whole field force was probably no more than 30 guys then. Now they've probably got about 100, I imagine, or more.

(I don't know how big Oklahoma is compared to—I know Texas is huge, but I don't know about Oklahoma, I don't know how many people.)

They have built up their personnel over the years. So we did that. But sometimes I would stay with the government hunters, I'd stay with 'em, stay overnight. They'd let me stay with 'em. I'd leave some money. I was always told to leave money.

([chuckles])

'Cause I was gettin' reimbursements.

(Per diem, yeah.)

So I always leave 'em—boy, I'd eat good, too.

([laughs])

Farm people, you know. It was really—I really enjoyed it.

(What were some farms that you visited that you remember specifically?)

What?

(Any of the ranches, problems that you encountered, do you remember anything that was a real problem that took a while to solve?)

To solve? Well, it was an awful lot of 'em. [laughs] Awful lot of 'em. We had a sheep man down in southwestern Oklahoma, I think he was around Cooperton. He was one of those guys that he told the people, he got back there and he said, "You don't ever want to get off their backs." He would call almost every week or so. "I got a problem, I got a problem, you gotta come down here, you gotta come down here!" I got a guy over there right now where I trapped on this past winter in eastern Oklahoma, if a neighbor even hears a coyote—

([laughs])

— he calls me. "Oh, you gotta come do somethin' about that!" You know. [laughs] But they get that mentality. I guess they've had trouble in the past. But you don't have those guys—most of 'em are pretty—they're not experiencin' any losses.

0:29:04.9
Now, these fur trappers, they'll claim predator control. I had one 'em call me, and I probably—he apologized later for sayin' it, but he was braggin'. He went down in southwest Texas one winter and caught maybe 300 or 400 coyotes. And he was braggin' about it, how the rancher was so happy. I said, "That's good, that's good. But I want to tell you one thing. The only way to measure your success in predator control, you don't measure it by the number of coyotes taken. You measure it by the numbers of sheep, lambs, and calves that reach the market. That's the way to tell what your success is." Because one coyote in the right place is worth 100 taken where they're really not botherin' a whole lot.

(How do you know you've got the right coyote? How did you figure it out?)

Well, if the killin' stops, you know you did! [laughs]

([laughs] Okay.)

If the killin' stops, you know that's—durin' the summer months, if you get the—generally if you get the den, get the pups, you've got the immediate situation. Now, you may have it pop up somewhere else. The guys are always busy, keeping out things. I went to Arizona, transferred out there.

(When was that?)

[pause] Probably around 1960. This is what they gave me when I left.

(Oh, your brag book.)

So I got out there, and it was a completely different ball game, just a handful of men and a lot of country. Trapping was just not their thing, except for one man who was a bear trapper.

(So they had bear and coyote? What other kinds of problems did they have?)

Mostly it was coyotes and bobcats, bears, and lions.

(And lions.)

I went out there and all those guys were just completely, totally poison-oriented. I had a difficult time dealin' with 'em, and maybe some of 'em didn't think too much of me. I wanted 'em to trap, but they said, "We don't want to set any traps, we have to go back and run 'em." What they liked to do is put out poison all winter and then strychnine and the other types, and then they'd use the cyanide gun, the .38 special then. And they would use them. That's all they used. So they didn't have to run that stuff over there, set 'em a couple days ago, run 'em once a week, once every two weeks, reset 'em. They had done a good job of pullin' the coyotes down, all right.

0:31:45.0
(Wouldn't they kill everything else around there, too?)

Not on 1080, really. Now strychnine is not as selective. But they relied mostly on 1080 and the cyanide gun. You will kill very few things with a cyanide gun. Raccoons will pull 'em with their feet, and you'll kill a fox or something now and then. But it's not that bad.

(Is a cyanide gun like the early M44?)

Same design. I'll show you pictures of them. I'll show you pictures here where we have—a guy developed a thing to cut a hole in the ground and drive on down there and just leave the top level with the ground, because we worry about calves. I never killed a calf on a cyanide gun, but I was always worried about 'em, 'cause those calves are curious and they'll pull a lot of things. I don't remember investigating where we had a calf killed by a gun, but we were always worried about it, particularly if you put anything in the bait that was sweet that might cause 'em to pull 'em.

I had a lot of trouble in Arizona, the guys, they wouldn't trap. I just had to practically make 'em set traps, and they just didn't like it. When I left, they were glad to see me go—[laughs]

([chuckles])

— 'cause they just—but I could see—they had a lot of company, but you're not goin' to kill bobcats on poison. You gotta trap 'em, and they wouldn't trap for bobcats. I was tryin' to get 'em to trap for cats, and they wouldn't do it.

This one fella, and you're gonna take this back, I wrote this up, Russell Culbreath, he was really a super, super tracker.

(Tell me about him.)

This is goin' back. I wrote two articles in *The American Trapper*. I put both of 'em together for you here. He caught lions, he caught 300 bears.

(Is he the bear trapper?)

He caught the only jaguar I think that's ever been trapped in Arizona.

(So he was the one that was the bear trapper down there who worked for you?)

Yeah. See, he was also originally from Oklahoma, so we had a lot in common to start with. He didn't have any education hardly at all. He was really a genius as far as trappin'.

(It says he lived in the same cabin formerly used by General Crook. I like Western history, so that's interesting.)

He worked on the Fort Apache Indian reservation.

(OK, he worked on the reservation for the Indians.)

But anyway, you'll get that—

(I'll enjoy that.)

When he was a young kid he was trappin', you know. He caught lions. I don't know how many lions he caught. He caught 300 bear, 1,000 lion or somethin'. It was a bunch of 'em. He really caught 'em.

(Did he use hounds?)

No. Steel trap. He was a steel trap man. Yeah, he was good at it, too. He was highly respected on Fort Apache, I know that. And he was a good guy, too, alongside of it. And we were really good friends. I wrote this article after he passed away, and then his children, they wrote for copies of the magazine and we sent 'em a whole bunch. They were really tickled, because it meant a lot to 'em. This other one here was an early thing. It came out in the same magazine, but it was written in earlier years. [chuckles] One of the guys in Arizona set the cyanide gun.

(We've got a lot of old photographs at the Center that I'm trying to scan and put in.)

I've got a bunch here, if you want to look at 'em after while, photographs I've saved. I've got these annual reports. If you want these, you're welcome to take 'em, 'cause I don't want 'em any more.

0:35:48.0
(You don't want them? OK, I'll take 'em.)

These are all gonna go back with you.

(I'll put 'em in the archives. I can take 'em in my suitcase. [noise])

Yeah, I've got photographs in here, too, I was gonna show you.

(When you were working, did you ever do any work for the Research Center that you knew about, were aware of?)

Well, on bird control. You heard the name Fitzwater?

(Oh, yeah, Bill Fitzwater, yeah. We have his reprint collection at the Center. When he passed away, his wife gave it to us.)

Best Yankee I ever met.

(Yankee? [laughs])

[laughs] Really good, really a dandy one. There's a lot of pictures. Bill and I—this John Meyers was my assistant here in Oklahoma. He just passed away about two months ago. John C. Meyers. He was just about my age. Well, anyway, we'll get into the bird control thing here. I was gonna tell you somethin' kind of—you had one of your questions there about, have you ever had anything that was amazing? We had—here at Oklahoma City I had a request from the city of Tulsa. Pigeons in downtown Tulsa. They were messin' on cars and things and they were just a general nuisance. So Bill came over, and we had this, what they called DRC1339.

(Yeah, we still use it.)

[chuckles] And we mixed up this corn. The regional office and the powers in Washington would have had heart failure. Bill drove the pickup. I was sittin' in the back end of the pickup drivin' right down Main Street and throwin' out the corn! [laughs]

(Oh, my God! Jeez!)

These pigeons were small, and people were sayin', "Ooh, isn't that wonderful? They're feeding the pigeons!" [laughs]

([laughs])

"Isn't that nice? Oh, that's so nice!"

(That's terrible, when they start—)

The guys in Washington would have had a fit.

([laughs])

Well, it's slow-acting. They all went—down at the rail yard, they had this huge thing where they pulled all the trains under, and all these pigeons roosted on top of there, 250 pigeons died on top of this thing. [laughs] They had to get the hook and ladder truck out from the fire department to go up there [claps hands] and get 'em off there. [laughs]

([laughs])

We laughed about it, because we were ridin' down the people were like, "How nice, they're feedin' the pigeons."

(You guys are terrible! [chuckles])

We came out all right on that. While we were up there, there was a little small cow lot, I've got a picture or two here of it, and we went out there to just check on the bird situation. Just loaded with brown headed cowbirds. So Bill had some TEPP, are you familiar with that?

(Unh-unh.)

Tetraethyl Pyrophosphate. Very lethal, very lethal. And we had some cracked maize and we sifted out the flour, and Bill knew how to mix the right amount of the TEPP. You put in acetone and you stir it in. We just scattered—it was a small feedlot, we went and we just treated the whole thing. And then we went off and got a cup of coffee. Came back in about an hour or two [pause] there were dead birds everywhere. We picked up and counted 4,000, 4,000 cowbirds.

(Cowbirds, I didn't know there were that many.)

Four thousand cowbirds, you know?

(God!)

0:39:24.7
We don't have too much love for cowbirds, because you know what they do?

(Yeah, they ruin—they steal other birds' nests, don't they?)

They put their eggs in other—so I didn't mind killin' those things. [chuckles]

(Gosh.)

Anyway, we picked up 4,000 of 'em. So I worked with Fitzwater. He was a great guy.

([chuckles] He sounded like a character. I talked to him a couple of times. He was real nice, a real nice man. What did you like best about what you did, about your job?)

[pause] Oh, boy. That's hard to say. I just liked bein' out in the field mostly. I didn't care that much for the paperwork in the office. I didn't care about that. I knew I had to do it, but I'd much rather be out—I was happier when I was out in the field workin', whether it was bird control or prairie dog or coyotes. That was the—and of course I was learning all the time, but see, I've always been interested in trapping. I'm still trapping, still trapping

(On retainer, or do you—you don't go out for the fur, do you? Right now?)

I trapped this past winter for bobcats and raccoons and coyotes and gray fox. And I didn't get to do very much of it, because they stole all my traps.

(That's what I heard.)

But in the 18 winters prior to that, I trapped in Collingsworth County, Texas, made lots of friends out there, trapped on the Mill Iron Ranch, I don't know whether you heard of it. Used to be called the old Rockin' Chair.

(I've heard that name from the trail drives.)

There was three main ranches I think in the whole Texas Panhandle. The Rockin' Chair was one, and then the XIT was one. I'm not sure if I can remember the other one.

(From the old trail drives, Charlie Goodnight—)

Could be.

(— when they brought the cattle up from Texas, I think they came from one of those ranches.)

Could be. I can't remember the third ranch, but mostly those three ranches encompassed almost all of the Texas Panhandle in the early days. But at the time I went out there, the Mill Iron was down to 32,000 acres. They let me trap on it. I had a ball. You didn't have to worry about—in 18 winters out there, I lost one trap to thieves. One trap.

0:41:53.0
(That's because there's nobody out there! [chuckles])

And the ranchers, they watch out there. But the reason I came back to Oklahoma to trap is because now this deer hunting has become such a thing, and people comin' clear from the Carolinas and up north will come out there and shoot a white-tailed deer.

(Is that just on private ranches?)

Yeah, leasing. It's big business. And this main rancher that Don Hawthorne put me in contact with, Don got me in out there, he told me, he says, "I make more money of my honey than I do off my cattle." So it got to where they said, "But we appreciate what you're doin', but can you hold off till after the deer season?" You're halfway almost out of the season, and then here comes the quail huntin'. So the last season I trapped there, altogether I was never on more than six sections, and that was not at one time. They just had me squeezed down. The guys were real nice, I got more friends, they all love me out there, but they just can't turn down that good money. The hunters just can't have you interrupt them. So first it was me who night spooked the deer away from the hunters, and then there's the bird dogs that might get in the trap.

(James [?] was talking about the problem with people that ran hounds and they didn't like his traps and they would destroy his traps.)

Oh, yeah.

(Did you ever run into that?)

Oh, very much so. Oh, even when I was working for the Game department down in Lake Murray, it's a state park, but they have what they call a peninsula that goes out there, and they had one gate that you go through. Well, I made friends with the supervisor and he let me lock that gate, but that locked out the hound men, they liked to go in there and run their hounds for sport. But what they do wasn't for sport. If their dogs catch anything, it's dead. They always say, "Oh, no, we pull our dogs off the coyotes. We don't let 'em kill 'em." Yeah, sure. You know how that goes.

0:43:58.3
But anyway, I had trouble with the hound men there, and the old game warden there, he was in with the hound men. He just kept sayin', "Why don't you stop trappin'? Get rid of that duck trap and get out of here." I wouldn't do it. Boy, he was ready to almost come to blows with my supervisor there. This old game warden says, "If you don't make him pull that duck trap out of there, we're gonna go to Fifth [?] City." My supervisor said, "I'm not gonna let anything stop you but fear itself." So I stayed out there. But the guy, he sure didn't like it. That's where I—and then I've had trouble in many, many places with hound men.

There's a story that Don will probably tell you about, too, that got me busted out of my job with the hound men. But anyway, you asked one question about the scariest moment.

I got in where—these were coyotes that I called and shot. I got really hung up on calling and shooting varmints. I'd even go clear down into old Mexico and get licensed up and boy, those coyotes had never been called. They were really easy to call up. In Arizona, I was down on the border, on the Papago Indian Reservation. I got up on a hill, it was kind of a little embankment there, and a shelf was behind me. I had my head kind of where I'd be concealed, and I was callin', I had a good place to call. I was callin' and callin', and I looked around, and there was a gray fox right there behind me. Right there.

(Jeez.0

Well, I didn't want to shoot him, you know, 'cause I was waitin' to kill a coyote. So I just said, "Well, he's just excited, he'll run off." All of a sudden that sucker reached out and grabbed me right there, grabbed me right there.

(Oh, my God!)

I reached around and got him and pulled him around and I killed him with my hands.

(Jeez!)

I said, "Well, he's just excited." [pause] Maybe, maybe, maybe, just to be safe, maybe I'd better cut his head off. So I cut his head off.

(You were worried about rabies?)

Put it in the ice box. That was on a Sunday. So Monday mornin', the first thing I did, I went down to the Maricopa County health department and gave that fox to them. In about two hours they called and they said, "You get your butt down here on the double!"

(Oh, God.)

That sucker was hot positive.

(Oh, my God! You had to have all those horrible shots?)

That was scary enough to be my scary tale. I had to take the series of shots.

(Those are very painful, aren't they?)

Well, mostly, I got some reaction to it, I kind of got serum sickness from it. It was equine-based serum. I got some reaction to that.

(Oh, God.)

That was the only really scary moment that I can remember.

0:46:54.9
(That's scary enough. I wouldn't worry about it. Now you've got all the different kind of wildlife diseases that these guys are dealin' with now that they have to worry about. What was the most challenging thing about what you had to do?)

Oh [sigh] [pause] Probably tryin' to get the job done without the people in Albuquerque and Washington gettin' on my case, you know. Because they all run so scared of the environmentalists, they're runnin' scared to death. I don't know the total history between the Interior and Agriculture, but I guess Interior was glad to get rid of us, probably. We were probably an embarrassment to 'em, trouble to 'em. They tried to clean up the organization. I don't—it didn't set well with me. The branch of Predator and Rodent Control still is my, if I had it tattooed, it'd be on my shoulder. They took away our belt badges that said that, they took away our field guides, how to control, took away everything and anything that had to do with that and started all over with this ADC business. They called three of us, Buddy Abraham in Louisiana and myself and Harvey, Harvey—I can't think of his first name. They brought us into Washington to work and to revise the control manual, make it up to their standards.

What did we do? [chuckles] We took the existing one and just practically copied it word for word.

(Oh, jeez.)

We spent two weeks up there at least doin' that, 'cause the cost and everything. So what happens when we go back? Day 13 they threw it out. That wasn't what they wanted. They wanted something else that didn't agree with what we did in the past. So Harvey—Harvey Edwards, that was the other guy. Margie, and his wife, Margie was with me up there and his wife, Ann. They got to go out while we were there and see all the historical things around Washington DC. So she enjoyed it.

([chuckles])

But we were tryin' to keep it like it was, but they just threw out everything, trying to clean it up. So I don't know how they cleaned it up or not.

(There's a new handbook. I don't know with it says, I haven't looked at it. Did they not let you use poisons and everything? They just wanted—what—)

They really don't—they didn't want us to. Now, I don't know. You'd have to talk to John. I don't know whether they used 1080 in Oklahoma or not.

(I think they do on their controlled—but I'm not positive, I shouldn't say that. But it's very controlled. They use the M44, which—but I don't know about the livestock collaring. I'm not sure.)

Are you familiar with the policy on how 1080 was put out?

(Unh-unh. No.)

You know that there's 36 sections in a township?

(Yep.)

We were allowed one bait per township, an average of one bait per township, I should say. In other words, if you had several townships, you could put no more—if it was 10 townships, you couldn't have more than 10 baits. Now, you might have two baits in one, but for the most part, no more than an average of one bait per township.

(Per week?)

Per winter.

(Per winter? Oh, my God!)

So when I go to Arizona, they had used 1080 a lot out there, but they cut their baits up small. And when I get the reports back from 'em, they would say, proud, "100% feeding." And I said, "Fellas, you didn't put out enough bait, 'cause if you came back with 90% or 95% feeding, then you had enough bait. But if you come back with a bare bone, there were still coyotes there." So they were puttin' those small baits out, so—I'll show you a picture of John Pickens puttin' out three hind quarters of a horse to have enough bait there to kill 'em. 1080 works. You're familiar with the scent and everything. It did a great thing, and it wasn't lethal for anything else, except canines. It was really a great way to control coyotes, and very safely, too, and you didn't have to run it every day. That was the nice thing about it.

(So with trap lines, you have to do a lot of manpower, to go out and check at night, check every 24 hours?)

A lot of miles, drivin' miles, and with this gasoline situation, you can see how that is. But now with the cyanide gun coyote-getters, M44s, they don't have to be run that often, once a week.

And Glynn, they've got these snares, you know. I don't know how—Glynn, he doesn't run but once a month or something like that. The snares are the most innocent-looking thing. Of all the control we have, the snare is so innocent-looking. It fades back into the bayou. It just sits there. Now, the traps grab and hold, but the snare, if the animal didn't fight and struggle, it wouldn't do anything.

(Can't get out.)

The more he fights it, it tightens down and he kills himself. But it's the most innocent-looking thing.

(That's all they've got left in some places.)

0:52:35.3
Out there, I had a request, in one place, I had on one—every winter, the county commission would get hold of me, in Collingsworth County, there was a creek, and every time they had a great big huge tin culvert, beaver would plug it up—

([chuckles])

—makin' a dam. And the water would go over the road and wash out the road. So every year I'd go to them and I just hung a snare on each side of the culvert, got a beaver on each one the next day. Poor old things, they were so stupid, they'd just sit there and go right through it. It's funny, these Conibear traps, these great big ones, I had one place where a guy had a beaver pond and he had fooled with 'em some way, with traps or somethin', 'cause they were trap-shy. I couldn't get 'em to go into this 330. But I hung the snare there, got him the first night. The snare is just so innocent-looking, but yet to be so deadly. It really works great. But I think here in Oklahoma, I don't think they let 'em use them, as far as I know.

(I think Wisconsin and Minnesota are using snares a lot now.)

Glynn makes 'em by the thousands down there and puts 'em out. They work great. Glynn was tellin' me, there was one guy had a snare set in a slide under a fence. He said it sat there for three years before it finally caught a coyote. [laughs]

([laughs] Was it the coyotes were just so smart? It was in the wrong place?)

No, he found what we call a scamper hole or a slide, and every time he'd find one, he'd hang a snare there. But it was just one that they didn't use. Finally after three years one decided to go under—

([laughs])

— and he got caught and killed. It works really great.

(Did you ever do any lion work?)

No.

(Or use hounds?)

No, I never did get into—I didn't ride with Russell or anything.

(No bear work?)

No, I didn't get into that. That was one thing that I missed out on. But it didn't bother me that much.

(I keep hearing about wolves down in Texas. Do they mean brush wolves?)

Red wolves.

(Red wolf.)

Glynn is the one that's the authority on wolves.

(Yeah, he really was talking quite a bit about wolves.)

That's where—Glynn and I got together down around Liberty, east of Houston. He was down there working red wolves. That's where I got acquainted with him. And then they sent him up to Minnesota to work on wolves.

(I went up to Minnesota and talked to two wolf trappers up there in Wisconsin. After I finished the interviews there, I kept lookin' over my shoulder, looking for wolves all the time. [laughs] It was interesting. When you were talking about the public and everything did you ever have anybody confront you from the public about what you were doing, have to deal with—?)

You mean in sort of a hostile manner?

(Yeah, like an environmentalist group, a landowner or something that just didn't like the trapping?)

Well, there's a lot of them, but I never did have too much personally, you know.

(You didn't have to deal with people that were protesting or anything?)

0:56:01.2
I had a wife before Margie, she's deceased. She hated my job, she absolutely hated my job. She hated it, 'cause she was an animal lover. I guess if I'd have to say anything, it'd be her that complained about it. She didn't ever get on my case, but she just detested it. She just loved animals.

(It must have been hard to live with that.)

She was not mean about it or anything, but it just killed her. I'd be out there particularly killin' the prairie dogs. She really, and then of course den huntin', too. I don't think I told her about killin' the puppies. [chuckles]

(That's hard.)

But she—that was the only—as far as individuals, I don't remember any out of my memory, it doesn't bring back—if I'd had a real bad experience, I think it would have stayed with me, you know, with somebody threatenin' me bodily harm or something.

(It sounds like James got into a lot of situations. He did a lot of outreach. Did you guys go to state fairs and talk to the public and do education?)

Well, I still do, see, I belong to the Oklahoma Fur Trappers. We have displays, up here at Guthrie in August, we'll have a big to-do, where they'll be set-up display. Last year we had 40,000 people.

(My God.)

The furs went over great. We set up and show our equipment and everything, put on demonstrations. It was a good thing. A few people come by and said, "We don't like what you do," but they don't own any sheep and goats, either. [laughs]

([chuckles])

That's the thing about it. If their ox is not bein' gored, they don't really care. That's what—the thing of it is, the hound men don't own the land. But that's our huntin' ground. They're not even welcome on there, but they go out there at night, see, and dump the dogs out. They may just park on the section line and listen to 'em run the coyotes. That's our huntin' ground, but the ranchers don't even want 'em in there. And a lot of times—

0:58:33.8
(It's private land, isn't it?)

Yes. And they're trespassing. You've got to have permission to hunt. You go in there and do work, see, if you've got traps in there, then their dogs is gonna get caught and, boy, then they don't like it. If it's really cold weather and the dog freezes in the trap, that foot's gonna come off. But if you run your traps every day, it shouldn't happen that much.

Speakin' of dogs, I've trapped since '35, and the most vicious animal that I caught was a dog.

(Really?)

I was out in Texas, and it's not too many years back. I went to run this trap and there was a great big mastiff or Great Dane or somethin' like that, a big yella dog. And he came at me and if the trap hadn't been hooked, he would have really got me. I mean, it was the most vicious animal I've ever had come at me, and just not once, he just kept comin' at me. Just viciously.

(The Romans used to use—)

I had a cyanide gun on the end of the stick and I put it down there and crammed it, you know.

(They used to be used for hunting people, like, back in Roman times they used those big dogs.)

This thing—I've never had a coyote or anything, or bobcats always have a bad attitude, but nothin' equal to that dog. That dog was somethin'. I was too close to him to start with. I just barely—he just got that close to me.

(He could have taken your leg off.)

He could have really nailed me but good. But I put him down.

(Do you know who he belonged to?)

He didn't have a collar on him. I asked around, nobody knew anything. Just one of those things.

(Scary. What's your favorite trap?)

1:00:22.6
Well, I'm usin' the Montgomery #4. It's a four-coil. And it's what we call a step-in. It's dogless. I got it four-coil and got the base plate on, got the add-on jaws. It's reinforced, it's real stout. And it's really—by the time I get it all together, it's probably no more than $15, maybe. But these Newhouse traps are just out of sight.

(Yeah, they're expensive.)

And also, for the coil-spring traps, you don't have to dig as big a hole as you do with the long springs.

(Do you modify them at all or just use them the way they come? Do you have any special tricks?)

Oh, I modify 'em. You can use 'em right out of the box, but I modify 'em. I've got some that are just two-coil, but the four-coil traps, everybody's goin' to four-coil, as far as fur trappers. I don't know what the government's usin'.

(I don't know.)

M350s or somethin'. But they've got some stout coil-spring traps now. But the nice thing about the coil spring is, you don't have to dig as big a hole. The more you dig, the more you've got to blend in. Of course, I grew up on double-spring traps. I like the coils.

(Do you have any special lures that you use?)

Yeah, one of my hobbies is dabblin' with lures. I've got hundreds of different kinds of lures I've made up that I'll never live long enough to use. But yeah, I've got one that really worked good on—I made 82 sets with M44s and killed 84 coyotes on 'em.

(What was it made out of?)

Rotted-down prairie dog.

(Oh, God! [laughs])

And some rotted-down fish. It's got mink musk and deer musk. Is your husband a deer hunter?

(Yeah.)

He'll tell you about that tarsal gland on the hind leg. I cut those off and cover 'em with glycerine. It macerates, it takes it out, I mix the deer musk and the mink musk together and it goes into this bait that I use. It's really, really a good one.

(Must smell horrible.)

No, it's not really that bad. I'll tell you, particularly on cyanide guns, if you've got really a nasty rotten bait, they're gonna roll on it more than anything. You want 'em to feel like it's somethin' edible. So I think—a lot of 'em put tonkin [?] in there in their baits and things like that, makes a kind of a sweet smell. Sometimes you can have a fresh bait during the winter months. You don't want it rotten, I don't think. I don't particularly want it really rotten.

(You want 'em to try and eat it, take a bit out of it?)

I couldn't tell you how much money that I have spent on commercial raccoon bait, commercial. But I've got one I made up here a couple years ago, the best bait I ever had. Five parts of Smucker's strawberry jam—

([chuckles])

— to one part honey.

(I can believe it! [chuckles])

The raccoons, they just—I killed 60 raccoons out there last season.

(God! They eat all my peaches off my tree! [chuckles])

They love sweets. That works good. I don't know whether I'd recommend it around cyanide guns, because cattle might pull 'em. They'd lick it off, long as they don't pull it. That's what you put 'em down in a hole. I'll show you pictures after a while.

1:04:24.5

(Do you have to do any special kind of technique to cover it up and make it blend in with the surroundings, for coyotes or raccoons? Because they're really suspicious, aren't they?)

Yeah, coyotes, you have to be very careful about that. But you don't have to be so careful with raccoons. I don't think a raccoon would step necessarily in an open trap, but it's best—here's the way [shuffling of papers] that cyanide gun looks when it's down in a hole, can you see that?

([shuffling of papers] So you wouldn't even cover it up with anything?)

Oh, I'll tell you what you could do, you could put a cow chip on top of it. A coyote will flip that off anyway, if you're worried about it. But put it down in a hole like that and keep the calves from pullin' it, and then if a coyote reaches down and gets hold of it, he's really gonna get it good. He's not gonna pull it sideways. [looking through photos] Here's a guy that invented a trap-setter.

([chuckles] Picture of you.)

I gave him an award. That shows where I gave him an award.

(It's not John Wesley Hardin, is it? It says John Wesley.)

Hawkins. This is me when I was with Bill Fitzwater. We were mixin' the corn. [laughs]

([chuckles] Just before you drove down the middle of Tulsa dumping the corn! That's a great picture of you.)

1:06:02.6
Now, this is our first—this is the one, the head of the Oklahoma office, John Gatlin.

(John Gatlin.)

He became regional supervisor, and he was followed by this gentleman here, A.E. Gray, fine fellow.

(I've heard that name.)

I never did get to work for him, but I became friends with him through Aubrey Goodman, the game agent. He was a rifleman and liked to shoot a lot of paper. I had a rifle, too. I became quite acquainted with him. He was awful nice. He retired and then W.O. Nelson—you know. There's a picture of the town. You can see what's left of the calf.

(Is that what's mainly around this area, cattle and goats?)

Well, the goat is comin' in with the advent of all the migrants, Mexican people. *Cabrito* is desired. We've got Mexican restaurants all over here in Oklahoma City. So that red-headed goat, I don't know whether they call it a bore goat or what, it's one that they like. You're seein' more goats bein' brought in. Roy Crawford up at Camargo, Oklahoma, he was the leading trapper in the state for years. [shuffling of papers] Here's the kind of a display that we used when we put up

at county fairs and things. I did that. I did some work with the young adult conversation corps, I helped some time with those.

(My husband's working right now doing trail work up in the mountains.)

This is where I worked with them.

(He said those kids work their tails off.)

I worked around in Georgia with some of these kids.

(What did you do in Georgia?)

Oh, they were doing timber-clearing, mostly, I think, power lines and whatever. Then I've got all these group pictures if you're interested in lookin' at any of 'em.

(I'll tell John that you've got these photographs. He may need photos for his book.)

Yeah, whatever, yeah, we could get 'em made up for you.

(Get them scanned.)

1:08:32.6
Here's some old-timers here. [shuffling of papers] I want to see if I've got anything written on them. It says, "Crocket, Campbell, Isa [?], Newby [?], and John Gatlin. 1928."

(Oh, Lord.)

A picture of them together.

(They look like they've been through the—)

Here's the Texas group. I worked in Texas four years. Glynn Riley is there. [pause] You recognize anybody else there?

(No.)

This is what you find sometimes, what's left.

(Oh, Lord! There's not much left of the calf, eaten.)

That guy that had the skunks, he was down in __[can't understand] County, but he was a good trapper. That's the guy there Lyle [?], a good fella. He was really a good friend of mine. We got along just great.

(Did you ever do—besides the pigeons, did you ever do any urban work where you'd have to go in a town and catch raccoon that were causing problems or skunks or anything, or was it mainly out in the ranch areas?)

I tried out there in Texas, Wellington, Texas, red fox were coming in, but the coyotes are bad on red fox. So where you're gonna find most of the red fox is in town.

(So they moved in?)

They told me up in Wheeler County, word got back to the sheriff that was patrolling about 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning that there was red fox playin' on the county courthouse square—

([chuckles])

— the yard, the red fox were playin' out there. Which is OK, except they get to killin' calves and chickens. So one of the county commissioners there in Convert [?] County got hold of me, Eddie [can't understand] and he had chickens.

([chuckles])

And I went out there and there were dogs and cats everywhere. There was one place there was a kind of a slide, I put a snare there and killed a chicken the first thing.

([laughs])

I said—a neighbor said, "Why don't you just get out here with a shotgun early some morning and just wait?" It's in town, but he's a county commissioner.

[shuffling papers] This is where we drive that cutter to cut the—

(In the ground.)

—then that other picture goes with it I showed you. To set it down in the ground.

1:11:29.8
(These are great. Let's see, what else? Tell me if you want to take a break or anything. Have your trapping techniques changed over the years?)

Oh, yeah.

(How they changed?)

Probably bein' a little more careful than I used to be, for one thing. And I'm still not clean enough, still not clean as I ought to be.

(In leaving your scent behind?)

Yeah, I know I'm not as clean as I should be. My truck gets pretty nasty, probably. And the only thing where it's important is with coyotes and fox. But yeah, you can't handle things you know where you're gonna leave—but you know what? It depends maybe on the situation. Where I live,

I live on Tenkiller Lake. It's not a rural area, but it's out a way. We're 25 miles from any town. I've got varmints that come in the yard, and we put out food for 'em, scraps.

(Oh, God.)

We've got a red fox that comes in every night, and I handle his food bare-handed and everything and put it out there, and it doesn't bother him a bit.

(No, as long as he knows he's got a handout. [laughs])

It doesn't bother him a bit. We had one that was comin' in, it was real gentle. Margy went out there and took a picture of it. He was too gentle for his own good. Somebody killed him. But you try not to have any gasoline odors and things like that. You try to be as clean as you can. If I was gonna trap for the smartest coyote on earth, I'd find a place to make a set, and I'll show you in a minute the type of locations. I'd make that set, blend it all in, and I would just leave it for about a week or two, and then I'd come out and put just a tiny bit of bait on it. I'd let that thing air out completely. I had a place out there in the Panhandle on the peninsula, and the road just had a horseshoe effect comin' back on, but there was a mesquite tree there, the prettiest little bait bush you ever saw. And I set a tap there to blend it and it really looked good. It never did rain, and it just didn't catch. But it was right on the way, I could make that loop every day. The trap sat there for 30 days and finally caught a coyote.

(Huh.)

But everything was just right.

(It probably took him a while to get used to it being there.)

One thing I tell the guys, when you've got a location, you shouldn't make just one set, because we've got to watch the wind. John Pickens, if this was the bait bush, he would hold a little bit of dust up and see which way the wind was blowin'. If it came this way, that's where he'd set his trap, downwind. But the winds change. So if you're on a road and you found a real pretty spot, you need to make a set on one side and a set on the other, because the winds are gonna change. And I don't like east winds. I tell the trappers, I don't like east wind sets. Most of my sets would be from north clear on around to south. You can catch on east wind sets, but I prefer northwest winds, southwest, and south, for the winds. That's my personal view. Glynn may not agree with that. I don't know. But' that's just my opinion on that. You just need to make two sets.

(Let me change my disc.)

1:15:07.0 End file 1.

File 2
0:00:00.0
(We can start again.)

Anyway, here's a picture of John Pickens, three hind quarters of a horse. You've got plenty of bait there.

(Definitely. So you put something like this out and it would have strychnine on it?)

No, that's 1080.

(Would you normally get one or two coyotes with that? Or one?)

It'd kill a bunch of coyotes.

(I don't know how they move around. Are they in a family, a family group?)

They wind that from a long ways and come in. Coyotes got such a tremendous sense of smell it's unbelievable.

(Even if they find another animal that's dead there, they'll come in?)

The coyote won't die there. I think one of the symptoms is running and barfing and running and barfing and barfing. I believe it was around Seguine, Texas, the supervisor byrl Bierschwale, he's gone now, he and I and Ewell Stevens [?], we butchered three head of horses one Friday afternoon, treated 'em, and just left 'em there. Three horses, now, completely butchered. We were gonna come back Monday and put it out in the county. We came back Monday and all three horses completely eaten up, consumed.

(My God!)

Can you imagine how many coyotes is took to eat that much?

(That's huge.)

We had to go get some more horses.

(That's a lot of meat.)

That's a lot of coyotes. Putting out enough bait at the station is a good thing. Here's a picture of bird control.

(There's a pile of birds. Are those blackbirds? Cowbirds?)

Probably cowbirds, blackbirds, red [cannot understand], I imagine.

(Did you have a problem with grackles around here?)

0:01:56.7
Not at that time, not at that time.

(Did you do any work with bird damage, like citrus, getting into—)

No, just feedlots, mostly.

(Feedlots, okay.)

This was a feedlot. We got into gopher control when they got this burrow builder. [shuffling of papers] That's the three-point hook-up. They have one that's called a draw bar, just a single hitch. That's the three-point hook-up. The state's really picked up on that. You'll see that along the highways, if you've ever seen where it's been a slice in the shoulder?

(Yes.)

That's where they're plantin' that because the gophers dig under the pavement. This is John Pickens, the real coyote man, with pups that he killed.

(And he went to a den site and culled all the pups out?)

Yes.

([shuffling of papers] This is John Pickens, Assistant District Agent, Custer County.)

I think this is probably up there in Tulsa, where we killed the cowbirds.

(My God. Looks like there's several hundred cowbirds in this livestock feedlot.)

Four thousand of 'em. [laughs]

(In this livestock feedlot.)

When we got 'em picked up, it was about 4,000. This is probably the same deal, where Bill Fitzwater and I were mixin' the grain to kill the—

(I'm glad you've got gloves on. [chuckles])

That TEPP is really dangerous. It's really lethal. You had to be awful careful with it. [shuffling of papers.] [pause] This is—of course everything I learned about bird control, this is acetone that we poured into the barrel to—

(Rattlesnakes?)

Oh, yeah, I came up on a bull snake that had killed a cottontail, and I just happened to be at the right place at the right time to take a picture of it, just happened to be out in the field at the right time. [shuffling of papers] What else here? This is the display we had one time that we put out at county fairs.

(We've been putting up taxidermied animals at the Research Center of the different critters we work on, and people are just fascinated by them. They really find them interesting, like a nutria or a vulture, you don't normally get close enough to see them. Or a mountain beaver.)

0:04:31.9

Some animals are expanding their territories, like the red fox is goin' west, and the nutria rats are comin' into Oklahoma.

(Really?)

It was on our TV that there's alligators now down in southeastern Oklahoma. They come in.

(Aren't you glad you're not havin' to work now? [chuckles] You'd have to chase an alligator down.)

And otters are comin' into Oklahoma. The fur trappers I think have about talked the Game department into lettin' us trap otters. I've never trapped any otters. I think they've just about got 'em talked into lettin' em do that.

(What's the most damage-causing animal in Oklahoma?)

Well, it would have had to have been the coyote.

(Coyote? The livestock damage?)

Principally, it was—the bird control came later, and it didn't come on until you all developed the toxicants. Because we really didn't have anything that was that great.

(They're using DRC1339 up in North Dakota, and Avitrol is another one that they use.)

I don't know that I ever used that. I remember readin' about it, but I don't remember that.

0:05:47.4
(What about, I went blank, what I was going to ask you, fish farms? Have you had any problems with aquaculture damage?)

They do have with otters in fish farms. Fortunately, I didn't have to fool with it, but they're havin' it now. They're raisin' so much catfish, and otters get in there.

(I bet they think it's a smorgasbord.)

Oh, yeah, have a field day. You know, up here they have this wildlife day, I don't know what they call it now, up here in Guthrie, Oklahoma. They have a pond there, and the Game department had a whole bunch of channel catfish that they stocked in there, and you let the kids come in there and fish. The kids got so much of a thrill.

([chuckles])

They even let 'em—furnished him rods and reels. It was a great thing.

(They do it at Horsetooth Reservoir. They love it. Do you have grandkids?)

I've got three granddaughters and I've got, let's see, four great-grandchildren.

(Great grandchild. Do any of them hunt and fish?)

No, they're all girls [chuckles] —

(I've talked to a couple people—)

— except of the great-grandkids, I think there's two little tiny boys. We don't have much contact with 'em.

(You'll have to wait. I know several people have said that their granddaughters went out trapping with them and are really good at it. It's unusual.)

Yeah, we've had—I was in places where women trappers were pretty good. They can be just as good as the men could in every respect.

(If you grew up with it, you really know how to do it.)

That's for sure.

(How will trapping and wildlife management be in about 50 years from now? Any ideas or opinions?)

0:07:35.2
There's always gonna be problems, you know that, whether it's rat and mouse control, bird control, gophers, woodchucks. You're probably gonna see more urban work. But now you've got so many of these, what do you call it, private pest control operations, PCOs, that are handling that.

(They don't like us to compete with them.)

And they charge—I had a guy I knew in Pennsylvania, and he was licensed and everything, and he got a call from a guy and the guy says, I guess he's tryin' to feed birds, like I do, he says, "I've got 38 squirrels here right now, eatin' out of my bird feeders." Old Bob, this guy, says, "You don't want me." He says,"Why?" He says, "Because I get $40 a squirrel." That old boy says, "How quick can you get here?"

([chuckles] Oh, Lord, that's expensive!)

Squirrels really are a problem. I've got a little live trap there. At home I have trouble with dang squirrels, too. And I have just a little live trap. I set there in one place, and one summer I caught 97 squirrels in it.

(Oh, my God.)

And every one of 'em flunked their swimming lesson. [laughs]

([laughs])

All of 'em were grays exception two, there were two fox squirrels. The gray squirrel is really pestiferous. I've got a feeder with just a little tiny chain that comes down from way up, and that sucker can climb down on that chain and reach down there, upside down.

(You need to get one of those domes, those bird feeders that have domes on them. I have those and that helps.)

He hangs upside-down and feeds off that thing.

([chuckles])

It's just aggravating. I think they're gonna always have trouble with squirrels. I don't know how the rat and mouse thing is comin' out. Back east, it was big-time. And in Texas too—we have the roof rat and then the Norway. You know how to tell them apart?

(One's bigger than the other?)

The roof rat, the tail, if you pull it up the back, it comes clear down to the tip of their nose. It's a long-tailed rat.

(I had an aunt that had one, it would come into her house and get into her aluminum foil drawer and just steal that, nothing else.)

I'll be danged.

(And then go back out. She lived in California.)

I think you're gonna have problems with birds. Boy, you mentioned grackles. If you come over here to Bethany, up here, right about just within an hour before sundown, the wires are gonna be huge, just solid with grackles. It's a boat-tailed grackle that's come in.

(Squawks really loud, squawking)

There must be a grove there somewhere where they roost.

(How about crows? Any problems with crows around here?)

0:10:45.1
We have, let's see, I did some crow work somewhere, but it wasn't much of anything, really. It didn't amount to anything.

(In Auburn, New York, the New York State Wildlife Services director had to deal with 40,000 crows coming into a town.)

Oh, boy.

(It was just unbelievable. It was a big public relations deal, too.)

Yeah, I can well imagine. I've got to laugh at Bill Fitzwater, I wasn't with him when it happened—

([chuckles])

— but somewhere in town, there was this huge—I guess it would be right down the street, there were trees on both sides, and there were thousands of birds, I don't know, starlings, probably. Just about sundown they'd all be gathering. And he had this exploder, [laughs] —

([laughs])

— and he would fire it off. [laughs]

([laughs])

He said, "Then you get out of the town and wipe off!" [laughs]

([laughs] Everything wipe off.)

"Get out of town and wipe all the bird crap off!" [laughs]

([laughs])

Anyway, they use those exploders in places still around orchards and things where they want to keep animals and birds out that bother them. Beavers have really become a problem. When I was a young fella trappin', there were virtually no beaver in Oklahoma. We had a man who worked for the Oklahoma Game and Fish department, Glen Jones, and there were a few beaver up in Ellis County in northwestern Oklahoma. He took this live trap, I'm not sure I can remember the name of it, great big cage.

(I know what you're talking about, not a Conibear.)

Anyway, it's a thing, the beaver walks in and it catches him alive. He planted beavers. We were tryin' to [cannot understand] all over the state. And they did a good job. Now they're spendin' thousands of dollars killin' 'em.

([chuckles] Control 'em.)

They've really come back. They're gettin' these changes of different problems which are gonna be different problems. Like the grackles come in, armadillos. There weren't any armadillos hardly when I was a kid. Now they're everywhere. They're diggin' in golf courses on the greens. They're a problem. Those things, you can't bait 'em, you have to just set up a live trap and put two boards where you think they're gonna run, and they'll just go right on in. Poor old thing, if you're really quiet you can go up and grab 'em by the tail, but you've got to really hold on, 'cause they're powerful, they'll jerk out.

(Oh, really?)

But when they're feedin', they're so intent on feedin'. I have armadillos over there where I am, but I don't bother 'em. Everybody else kills 'em.

(How about feral hogs?)

0:13:37.9
Feral hogs are comin' in strong. Glynn will tell you about that. They're comin' into Oklahoma now, and they're gonna really be a problem, because anything on the ground is table fare. I was told about a man who raised hogs, he was out feedin' the hogs somewhere and he had a heart attack and died. Time they got to him, the hogs had eaten him.

(That's what they said happened to Jimmy Hoffa [chuckles] they threw him into a hog farm and just gone, just disappeared.)

I wonder, you know, Jewish folks, they won't eat pork. But I read in the Bible, I think they didn't want to eat any animal that was a meat-eater, and the hogs will eat meat, so maybe that was the reason. I try to understand why they didn't want to—

(They're very dangerous, aren't they, the males? Like the boar.)

Yeah, but I mean back in primitive times, the animals that they—

(—wouldn't eat.)

—the hogs, and today they won't eat pork. And I think it has to do with, they don't want any animal that eats meat, like cats, dogs, canines, or anything like that. But hogs do eat meat. Maybe that's the reason they didn't want to in the early days.

(They have a different flavor to them, you can tell. It's a gamier flavor.)

But your question is, the hogs are gonna be an increasing problem, they are. That's what in the future, they're gonna—now of course, Glynn, they're killin' 'em out of the choppers.

(Did you ever do any aerial hunting?)

No.

(Glad you didn't have to do it?)

I'm glad I missed out on that.

(It's dangerous, it sounds like.)

Yeah, I used to get airsick doin' duck counts, even—

([chuckles] Sounds good.)

— when I was countin' waterfowl. So I'm glad I didn't. But Glynn says when they're huntin' coyotes, they're killin' more hogs than they are coyotes. They'll kill 70 or 80 hogs in a day.

(There's been a lot of interest in doing research on them. Texas A&M is doing a big project, because the numbers are increasing.)

Speaking of Texas A&M, there was a professor, a research man from Texas A&M who gave a talk about quail research, and the problem they're havin' with raccoons getting into the deer feeders. He said they went out one night and spotlighted a deer feeder, and there was 28 'coons eatin' out of that deer feeder. [laughs]

(I can believe it.)

I was goin' to show you somethin' here, I don't know whether it's pertinent to you. This is back [shuffling of papers] let me find it in a hurry. Back when I was a youngster, raccoons were skinned open.

(Oh, I've never see that.)

See, they were skinned open. Nowadays, they're put like this, what we call cased. And also on the skunks, they didn't flesh—you see that flesh on the backside?

(Right.)

You didn't have to flesh it. Nowadays you've got to take all that off. I went by my fur buyer's place at Piedmont, Oklahoma when I was a kid. The night before they had been up till 1 o clock in the mornin' skinnin' skunks. It was the most beautiful sight you ever saw in the world.

(I think they have beautiful fur, but I would think it would smell really bad. [chuckles])

Oh, the smell was ferocious. [laughs] Anyway, nowadays, the 'coons are skinned what we call cased. Beaver of course had to be ripped down, but the difference then in those days on the raccoons, they split the legs that way and across here, but on a beaver you can't do that.

(Because of the way their body is?)

They don't want to want—

(—lose the fur?)

You just have one rip up this way and that's all, and you've got to peel out the legs. You can't rip the legs. So they do that.

0:17:56.6
(I was going to ask you something else. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the new Wildlife Service guys that are coming into the field now?)

Well, dealing with the new problems, the hogs, the grackles, the armadillos, the urban things, and places where you can't use toxicants. Catchin' 'em one by one in a live trap is an expensive, long, time-consuming thing. It is gonna be difficult. And then dealing with the pest control operators that are jealous of you because you're cuttin' out their business and that sort of thing. But the program here has expanded, so they don't need to worry. It seems like it's very healthy, I would say.

(We have more money than we did when we were in Fish and Wildlife.)

We're doin' great.

(A lot of them complain that they're doing more PR work now than they ever did before, and dealing with the public that doesn't really understand what it's like to—they don't know where their food comes from and they don't raise cattle or sheep—)

I know.

(— they don't understand the techniques.)

Like I said, the people that are against coyote control don't have any sheep. That's the thing. Like where Glynn is, they don't pen at night. Up in Kansas when I was up there, they penned all the sheep at night. But down there, they just leave 'em out.

(They're free-ranging.)

And those little ol' kid goats and lambs, they're just sittin' there waitin' to be killed, you know? You talk about innocent, there's nothin' more innocent than the lamb. All the coyotes can just grab hold of them. There's been cases, one guy down in southwestern Oklahoma, maybe out of a hundred sheep he had two lambs that ever survived, the coyotes got the rest of 'em. And they can't have that. I don't know about rabies, you're probably more familiar with that.

(The wildlife disease that's a big issue right now is chronic wasting disease with deer, and now the avian flu, the bird flu, that's what everybody's afraid of. They could use your skills, because now people are having to go out and trap waterfowl so they can swab them, and nobody knows how to do it. [chuckles])

0:19:20.3
This trap that I had, the longer I duck-trapped, the more sophisticated I got with it. I have a B-shaped pen at the edge of the water that goes out and it's in the water. You get in there and you had to catch 'em one by one. I had a floating live box, and I'd catch those things, they're just drowning and everything.

([chuckles])

So finally I cut me a—made a thing up on the land side and I built a pen, and that picture you saw was a drying pen where they go in there and can dry out.

(Fluff up their feathers?)

I'd give 'em a few minutes to shake off the water. Then I had had another place where I had a box. I'd drive—I'd get in the live pen and just drive 'em, they go right on in this narrow box, like that, about that long. You could tell the difference between the repeats—

([chuckles])

— and the first ones. The first time you catch a duck, he's petrified to death, just scared to death that this is the end. He's just really easy to handle. You catch him the next day and he's gonna flog you to death—

([chuckles])

— because he knows you're not gonna hurt him. He's lost all his fear. In the dark you can tell which one is a repeat and which one's not. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

The longer—and they just repeat over and over the longer you catch 'em.

(You keep catchin' the same ones?)

They just keep gettin' more and more aggravated.

([chuckles])

So I thought I'd mention that. Now they've changed—they say animals don't learn. They do learn. They learn, they sure do.

0:22:09.4
(Do you have any favorite stories you like to tell people—)

What kind?

(— about your work out in the field, anything?)

[pause] Well, let me see. There was these coyotes, I might have called all those up and killed one stand. I'm trying to think. [pause] When I first started calling, three came up and I killed one and missed one.

([chuckles])

And they ran off, and I just kept callin', and they just kept comin' in one by one, and I laid all the rest of 'em down. That was one of the most successful stands that I made as far as this calling is concerned. But it's unusual, 'cause generally when you shoot, that's the end of it. But here they just kept comin', just like somebody was lettin' 'em out of the box.

(You'd think they'd learn.)

They hadn't had the experience of gunfire. It was probably down in Mexico, where they didn't have much opportunity to be shot at.

(Were you working for the Mexican government down there?)

Now, I was just down there for the fun of it. Margy was with me, and I made friends with a Mexican fella to guide me and get me in on the ranches. We went out there and just had a good time. He had a rifle, he went with me. It was really enjoyable, a good experience. And the Mexicans were just real nice. I never have run into a hateful Mexican. I guess there's some around, but I've never had the occasion. They've all been real polite and well-mannered, particularly those down in there. Now, some of these Chicanos around here might be kinda tough to deal with, but down there, they were just very humble, very humble people. I enjoyed workin' with 'em.

0:24:06.6
There was a Mexican, Victor Garza, who worked out in Arizona, who was really a fine fellow, worked for me out there. I've got these group pictures if you're interested in lookin' at 'em, I've got them that you can look at. I don't know what else to tell you. Of course, you want to take all these with you, for sure.

(I'll take them, we collect—I've gone through all the questions. Is there anything else you want to talk about?)

Well, this is not anything you want to incorporate in the book.

(I was gonna ask you, are there any particular men you worked with that you really admired?)

Oh, my, yes.

(You mentioned quite a few of them.)

Oh my, yes.

(But the ones you showed in the photographs.)

John Pickens.

(Can you tell me a little bit more about him?)

He lived in Thomas, Oklahoma. He could read and write. I don't know where he picked it up, but John—I would always show people how to trap, but John would always say, "I don't show 'em anything. Let 'em learn the same way I did, the hard way. That way they'll always remember."

([chuckles])

He was just a super coyote man. If you had a problem, John would handle it. It would be done. Guaranteed it would be done.

(Did he ever work for the government?)

Oh, yeah, he was Assistant District Agent out of Thomas, Oklahoma. He had the northwest district. And then Charlie Rowland had the southeast, and I don't know if we had anybody up northeast or not. I can't remember. Northeast, I can't remember. We could have had it, but it's escaping me right now.

(You said you worked on the reservations. Were you working for the Indian tribe?)

We had a cooperative agreement with them.

(What was that like? Was it interesting?)

Well, the main one was the one where Russell Culbreath was—that was the one. And of course, they thought the world of him. You can tell if you read that. [pounds on book] They furnished all these pictures. I didn't take these pictures. I didn't take these pictures. They furnished 'em to me. It was interesting. I used to get skulls. We have a place here called Skulls, Unlimited.

(I've bought skulls from them for the library to have on display for kids coming in.)

Jay is a good friend of mine.

(Oh, you're kidding.)

I've known him since he was operatin' practically out of his garage. Now he's got a big facility.

(Yeah, I get their catalog. They're wonderful.)

I've sold him worlds of skulls.

([chuckles] I probably have one of your skulls. [chuckles])

I've sold him lots of skulls, yeah. His feral hogs, he was payin' $15 apiece for the heads if they hadn't been shot in the head. That place smells kind of stinky when you go in there. [laughs]

(I would imagine. [laughs])

But boy, he does a beautiful job. I went in there, and I guess it was a child, I don't know how he got it, 'cause he's got human skulls there, too. He had a little child. He said it was perfectly clean, every bone. He wanted $2,000 for it.

(He's got human skulls in the catalog and casts of prehistoric, the old prehistoric—)

Really?

(— like Neanderthal, those kinds of things. He's got pretty much everything in there. I don't know if he goes to museums and gets casts made or what.)

Yeah, he's a good friend of mine. I've got some traps I've got to return to me. He loaned me some lion traps and I never have given them back. He wanted me to catch some shrews, and I never caught shrew one. I didn't know where to set 'em, for one.

(They're about that big, aren't they? [chuckles])

He said, "Find a trail." But I couldn't tell where a shrew was, you know? [chuckles]

([chuckles])

I didn't ever catch any of 'em.

(You still do trapping, you enjoy that. What else do you enjoy doing?)

During the off season, tools.

(You and my husband would get along really well.)

Is he into antique tools?

(He's a carpenter.)

I'm interested in tools, antique tools.

(He likes—)

Again, I started out getting all of 'em, but space becomes a problem. So now, the tools I'm lookin' for are this size. Five inches and on down.

(Any kind of hand tools? Any kind?)

Yeah, wrenches. I'm still interested. I'm really still interested in that. That's what I do during the off season, collect tools. I'm always interested in small—but it's got to be small. Even if it's a big wrench that's got a wooden handle, a monkey wrench or somethin' like that, I might buy it, but I'm gonna resell it.

(Do you like American tools, any kind of tool?)

Yes, some of 'em are made in Germany.

(Mick has some Japanese hand tools.)

There's lots of them.

(These are not antique, but they're old.)

Most of the time, I don't want any Oriental tools, China, Japan, Taiwan. The guys don't want—the tool collectors aren't interested in 'em. But German-made, American-made, are highly collectible. They have what they call a perfect handle. It's a tool that's got part metal and part wood. Those are highly desired, people like them real well. So that's what I do.

0:29:46.7
Now, I went to the auction here a couple weeks ago out all El Reno and bought a few more, but not very many that I really wanted. I had a garage sale here, advertising. I sold $800 worth of antique tools and I didn't pay that much for 'em, so there's a demand for them. I gonna have another one in September. If your husband gets to collecting—

([chuckles])

— just tell him, make sure he's got enough room.

(He's gonna need his own barn, I think, for that.)

The guys that really can afford it have a barn. They just have the walls lined with tools. But I don't know how much trappin', I probably should get out of it, because of the difficulty now, I lost—it's hard for me to—there's plenty of animals for me to trap where I am, but whether I can do it without losin' everything I got, I don't know. And I don't want to go back to Texas. Texas kicked the fees up $300 to trap raccoons and then $150 I think, or $125, to catch bobcats. Trappin' license, it's only for two months. I don't know whether I can catch enough bobcats to pay for that. Up in your country now, you've got $300 bobcats up there. But we don't have that many up here, I think I might have got $100 for one or two, but mostly $75. But bobcat fur, it's really comin' on strong. They're usin' it a lot.

On that display up there, we had the tanned furs. The one pelt that got the most interest was sheer beaver. It was so beautiful. Everyone would just—they just couldn't keep from touchin' it, it was so nice. We had all the pelts there, but that was the one that really got the attention. And beaver have the good leather on it, too.

0:31:48.0
(I was going to ask one last question: do you have any regrets, things you would have done differently?)

Glynn, did he tell you anything, or Don?

(Just that he enjoyed working here.)

I lost my job here.

(Oh, I didn't know that.)

Down in southwestern Oklahoma, we didn't have a property agreement, but there was some ranchers down there havin' some trouble, so I sent a man down there to trap. There were hound men there. And they wanted the trapper out of there, so they wrote the U.S. Senator. [pause] He wrote a letter to Albuquerque and said, "Could you quietly remove the trapper?" So I pulled the

trapper out. Well, of course, you know what happens then. Here come the cattle men on me. So what I did was, I sent them a copy of that letter. They get back on the Senator. Then the Senator come down and they pulled me into Washington. "Don't you ever put my name in a letter or anything." They kicked me out. I lost my job. Broke my heart, yeah. I really loved it here. I wanted to be here. They sent me to Texas for four years.

0:33:16.2
After four years down there, I wasn't happy there, workin' under Caroline, I went out to a game ranch and put in to work for the refuges. The Kofa Game Range and the Cabeza Prieta. I had a million and a half acres of pristine desert land to take care of. The wilderness had been designated too. So all we had to do was just patrol and keep the waters, the windmills workin' and the water tanks filled. That's all we had to do. I got along real good there, made a lot of friends there, but then I was ready to come back home, and gettin' close to retirement. I had this YUCC [?], like the old CCC program, [cannot understand], and I put in for it, and they transferred me. I knew it was very sketchy and it wasn't gonna last. Sure enough, after one year it folded. So they offered me Glynn's job. Margie and I went down there and she didn't like the town and I didn't care much about it either. So I just took discontinued service retirement, and we're still over at Tenkiller. But this is our home here, and this is her mother's home. We're gonna be movin' one of these days, but boy, I've got a lot of stuff to get rid of.

(I know [chuckles] It sounds like you've got two barns full, sheds full of stuff.)

Traps and tools. We've got a three-car garage, and you can barely get one car in. [laughs]

([laughs])

My first shed, it was just a little one. [laughs]

([laughs])

I save everything but my money. Everything but my money. That's the dangdest thing.

(That's why you want to stay in one place, because you don't want to move everything! [chuckles])

I guess so, yeah.

(You sound like you've had a fabulous career, amazing.)

It's been interesting. I've had some good times. The only regret is that deal down there in Jackson County. That—

(Politics is—you can't fight the—)

—I guess what disappointed me was that the outfit didn't back me up. They knew that I didn't do anything bad. Now, if I had stolen government property, misused funds, you know, driven a vehicle somewhere, gotten drunk and wrecked it, or done somethin' bad, but all I did was just identify the guy that stopped it. And they didn't have the nerve to stand up for me. That—I just

couldn't believe they wouldn't do it. Particularly old John Gatlin. He was a hard-bitten old dude that had many, many years in service that he needed to retire. He could have told them they could take it and run, but he wouldn't. He just says, "You'll live." And I lived all right, but I wasn't very happy about it. That was the only sad part of the thing. But I've had lots of good things. You might want to look at some of this, I don't know what you're interested in.

(Yeah, I'd like to look through the book. I'll go ahead and turn this off.)

0:36:27.3 End file 2. End.